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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL PURSUANT TO SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 871 (1993)

INTRODUCTION

1. In Security Council resolution 871 (1993), adopted on 4 October 1993, the Secretary-General was requested to report two months after its adoption on progress towards implementation of the United Nations peace-keeping plan for the Republic of Croatia and of all relevant Security Council resolutions, taking into account the position of the Croatian Government, as well as on the outcome of talks within the framework of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia. The present report is submitted to the Council in accordance with that request. The Council decided, in resolution 871 (1993), to reconsider the mandate of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the light of the report.

I. TALKS WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

2. Within the framework of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, talks have continued with the objective of achieving a comprehensive cease-fire in and around the United Nations protected areas in Croatia and initiating discussions thereafter on economic confidence-building steps. These talks are continuing.

3. In the course of their efforts, personnel of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia have maintained close contact with UNPROFOR, whose activities have helped to develop a more positive atmosphere for the talks. Account has also been taken of President Tudjman's "Peace Initiative", which was circulated as a document of the Security Council (S/26681, appendix) on 2 November 1993. The "Peace Initiative" addresses the situations in the United Nations protected areas and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and future cooperation in the area of the former Yugoslavia. In so far as the situations in the United Nations protected areas is concerned, efforts are already under way on many of the issues raised by President Tudjman, particularly the search for agreement on a cessation of hostilities; resumption of the work of the Joint Commission; and normalization "of overall social and economic life in the UNPAs" and cooperation amongst the parties.

4. Following exploratory contacts by personnel of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, and with the good offices of the Governments of France and Germany, talks chaired by the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia were held from 1 to 3 November. At those talks a three-step strategy was accepted: first, discussion of a cease-fire; secondly, consideration of economic reconstruction; and finally, discussion of political questions. Some progress has already been made towards a cease-fire and in identifying economic matters of mutual interest.

5. The key elements of the cease-fire agreement under discussion are the separation of forces along the confrontation lines, with UNPROFOR interposing itself between the two sides and monitoring heavy weapons on both sides. In areas where there would be withdrawal, UNPROFOR would be interposed between the forces, with a degree of give and take over the key features of the Peruca Dam, Miljevici plateau, Zemunik airport and Maslenica bridge, which would remain under Croatian control, and the three villages near Maslenica and a key feature overlooking Obrovac, which would return to Serb control.

6. The main areas of economic interest to the two parties discussed at the above talks related to infrastructure and communications, energy and water supply. The parties concurred that there should be an agreement regarding the global use of energy systems, specifically the oil pipeline and the power plant in Obrovac. A priority was water supply and there was agreement to put the entire water system into operation and to restore the oil pipeline and the energy supply system. The Croatian side said that they were prepared to provide oil, petrol, seed and fertilizers at commercial prices to the Serbs in Krajina. The parties concurred that joint commissions should be established to examine and finalize practical arrangements concerning these questions.

7. The priority for the Croatian side was the road from Zagreb to Slavonski Brod, via Okucani. They indicated that following the implementation of the cease-fire, Zemunik airport and Maslenica bridge would be opened for use by both sides. The Serb side submitted that a route should be opened between Western Slavonia and Hungary and that road and railway traffic should be opened between Western Slavonia and Baranja, via Osijek. The Serb side also asked for access to the open sea from Rovanjska harbour and use of a part of Zadar harbour.

8. Further talks were held on 23 and 24 November and on 26 and 28 November. On 28 November the Croatian side said that with one modification they could sign the cease-fire proposal. A number of modifications proposed by the Serb side remained on the table and they said that in the current political climate, with impending elections (on 12 and 19 December), they could not sign the document without the changes they had proposed. The Co-Chairmen will assess the next moves in their efforts to bring about a cease-fire agreement. In the meantime, the parties agreed to establish a military Joint Commission to continue practical work on outstanding areas of dispute on the lines of separation to be used once the cease-fire is implemented.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE-KEEPING PLAN

9. Following the adoption of resolution 871 (1993), UNPROFOR reinforced its two-track approach of providing support for the talks sponsored by the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia and promoting step-by-step actions in the United Nations protected areas. The latter have been aimed at establishing, through the reduction of tensions, conditions favourable to a comprehensive cease-fire. UNPROFOR has also sought to assist over matters such as the activities of the Joint Commission established under resolution 762 (1992), and the "confidence-building measures" referred to in resolution 871 (1993).

10. There have been moves in all United Nations protected areas towards achieving local cease-fires. These range from a signed, formal cease-fire agreement in Sector East to "gentlemen's agreements" - oral and unsigned, but implemented - in the other three sectors, in each of which discussions are continuing towards formal agreements. Sector East exemplifies the step-by-step approach, in that a local cease-fire was first signed and implemented and was then followed by the establishment of local joint commissions to investigate violations. With these first steps in place, the Sector Commander has now proposed to each side the creation of zones of separation between their forces. Such local cease-fires have, in each sector, been supported by the establishment of new observation posts, additional patrols by United Nations military observers, and the installation of hot lines with, and between, the two sides. The consequence of this has been a discernible reduction in tension and violations throughout the United Nations protected areas.

11. Unfortunately, the deployment on 21 October (and subsequent withdrawal on 14 November) of Croatian "special police" in the areas of Sirinci and Masicka in Sector West heightened tensions there and caused a suspension of the negotiations which had begun a few days earlier. The "special police" elements were withdrawn after prolonged negotiations at the battalion, sector and ministerial levels. Unfortunately, also, UNPROFOR has not yet been able to achieve a cessation of the practice, prohibited in the original United Nations peace-keeping plan, of carrying weapons other than side-arms in the Serb-controlled southern part of this sector.

12. In accordance with the Force Commander's directions, sector commanders have taken a number of other steps on the military side to enhance cooperation and reduce tensions, including the opening of several new crossing-points and the enhancement of UNPROFOR's border-monitoring capability. They have managed to initiate, and then maintain, face-to-face meetings between the two sides' military commanders in, and adjacent to, all sectors and have pursued every opportunity to try to persuade them to move to greater cooperation.

13. In Sector South, small steps towards cooperation on a localized basis in humanitarian and economic matters have been possible, but elsewhere both sides have refused to meet, or have broken off scheduled meetings, because local leaders have said that they have felt unable to discuss such matters in the absence of progress at higher levels on security, economic and humanitarian matters.

14. On the positive side, in the village of Podlapaca, which contains the largest remaining concentration of Croats in Sector South, UNPROFOR has managed to stabilize a situation which had begun to deteriorate rapidly after the September 1993 incursion by the Croatian Army into the Medak pocket and the atrocities committed there. A full company of the Czech battalion has been deployed in this group of hamlets in the hills above Korenica, a United Nations Civilian Police (UNCIVPOL) station has been opened, and senior UNPROFOR officials have visited frequently, also sensitizing the Serb authorities to the need to provide protection. Comparable activities have occurred in some other areas.

15. It has been an increasingly significant task of UNPROFOR to identify those most in need of humanitarian help and to ensure its delivery to them. A joint humanitarian cell has been established, for instance, in Sector North, bringing together all elements of UNPROFOR, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), in order to identify the most needy in terms, especially, of food and medical aid. UNCIVPOL and the battalions are now heavily engaged in identifying and assisting those in greatest need. Comparable endeavours are under way in the other sectors.

III. OBSERVATIONS

16. As the developments reported above indicate, various initiatives are under way which, with the cooperation of the parties, could pave the way for implementation of the United Nations peace-keeping plan (S/23280, annex III). Progress is slow and is quickly halted if one side attacks territory held by the other. Nevertheless, in view of the developments reported by my Special Representative since my report of 20 September 1993 (S/26470), I do not find it necessary to recommend that the Security Council reconsider UNPROFOR's mandate at this time. If, however, the international community's very substantial commitment to peacemaking and peace-keeping in Croatia is to be sustained, it is essential that the two sides intensify their efforts for the achievement of a cease-fire agreement, for the institution of practical measures of economic cooperation and for the negotiation of a lasting political settlement. I also appeal to them to extend their cooperation to UNPROFOR in its endeavours to improve conditions in the United Nations protected areas.

17. In conclusion, I pay tribute to my Special Representative, Mr. Thorvald Stoltenberg, to the Force Commander, General Jean Cot, and to the personnel of UNPROFOR and the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, who are labouring incessantly, in difficult conditions, to promote implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council and to help the people on the ground.